

JUST ONE ST GEORGE'S COLLEGE STUDENT'S WARTIME STORY

Fred and I met at a New Year's Day picnic in 1937. I was in leaving year at school, Fred in second year Engineering at U.W.A and residing at St. George's College.

We formed a firm friendship in the years that followed. I started nursing training at Old Perth Hospital, nothing "ROYAL" about it in those days! On Sunday afternoons St. George's College students were allowed to ask friends for tea and cones in the beautiful refectory. On these occasions Fred would walk with me around the river and back to the hospital or we'd have a game of tennis. In early 1940 Fred completed his Engineering degree, we became engaged, Fred joined the Navy and was posted to HMAS SYDNEY.

Student nurses were not allowed to marry so we hoped to be married soon after I finished my training - War permitting - We were very lucky, every time Sydney came into Fremantle it was on my day off duty, it was quite uncanny. Fred said he thought God must have a kindly feeling towards us!

On 15th Oct. 1941 Fred came back having been at sea for three months, again I had my day off. To my surprise he asked me if we could be married that day. I could tell it was important to him but I knew I couldn't ask why. I happily agreed and thought if I was dismissed from the hospital so be it! Before meeting me Fred had called to see his

friend John Bell, rector of Christ Church
Claremont to ask if he could marry us. Yes,
he could if we had the special licence
signed. Off we set to Fremantle, obtained
the licence, bought a ring, a present for
John then back to Christ Church where John
Bell was waiting with his housekeeper who
agreed to be the witness. She looked
delightful, wearing a lovely Reghorn straw
hat adorned with a French rose. There was
I, the bride, with a scarf tied around my
head! We had our very special little service
in beautiful Christ Church. We thanked
John and his housekeeper, said farewell,
raced down to Bay View Tenace, just managed
to catch a bus into Perth and had photos
taken!

That night Fred said "Cobber, if
we can't spend any more of our lives
together we must thank God for what we've
had. Those words were so unreal that I
don't think I would ever have re-called them
had tragedy not struck soon afterwards.
Fred sailed early next morning and returned
on 10th NOV. We had that day together, then
Sydney sailed at dawn on 11th November -
Remembrance Day -

I was on evening duty at the
hospital on 24th NOV. When I noticed my
brother standing at the entrance to the ward.
It was after 8 p.m. and no visitors were allowed
into the ward, I knew something awful must
have happened. My brother handed me a
telegram that said Navy regretted to inform

me that my husband was missing, presumed dead,
as a result of enemy action. Fred's prophetic
words came flooding into my mind.

By next morning everyone in the hospital
knew that HMAS SYDNEY was "lost" and I had married.
Nobody reprimanded me, all were sympathetic. It
took me several months to come to terms with my
loss, only then could I obey Fred's wish for me
to thank God for the wonderful love we had shared.

BETTY SCHOCH

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